United Nations A/53/173 – E/1998/87

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 July 1998

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-third session
Item 12 of the provisional agenda*
Report of the Economic and Social Council

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 1998
Agenda item 13 (e)
Economic and environmental questions: public administration and finance

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/225

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 50/225 on public administration and development of 19 April 1996, the General Assembly invited Governments and public agencies to strengthen their public administrative and financial management capacities through public sector administrative and management reform, with emphasis on enhanced efficiency and productivity, accountability and responsiveness of public institutions, and encouraged, where appropriate, decentralization of public institutions and services. It also confirmed the importance and called for the enhancement of the effectiveness of United Nations activities in the area of public administration and development. Moreover, the General Assembly acknowledged that the role of United Nations activities and programmes in public administration and development is to assist Governments in improving their responsiveness to meet the basic needs of all, as well as in achieving sustainable development in all countries.

The General Assembly also recommended that the Secretary-General take appropriate measures in order to ensure maximum coordination of activities of the United Nations system in the field of public administration and development, and to ensure ways of strengthening the coordination, coherence and harmonization of the management and implementation of the operational activities of the United Nations system in the field of public administration and development. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-third session a report on public administration and development containing information on the implementation of its resolution 50/225.

* A/53/150.

98-20243 (E) 220798

Pursuant to the above request, the present report contains a synthesis and analysis of the information provided by the United Nations agencies on their activities and contributions to the implementation of Assembly resolution 50/225 on public administration and development. The report also contains specific recommendations regarding further work of the United Nations programme on public administration and development.

At the time of preparation of the report, replies to the request for information had been provided by the following United Nations bodies: Centre for Crime Prevention, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Development Programme, International Labour Organization, the International Labour Organization Training Centre at Turin, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the World Bank.

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I. Developments since the resumed fiftieth session

1. The resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly, which was devoted to the theme of "Public administration and development", took place from 15 to 19 April 1996, against the backdrop of a rapidly changing environment for public administration worldwide. In its resolution 50/225, of 19 April 1996, the Assembly highlighted the challenges faced by public administration and the responses required to meet those challenges at the national and international levels.

2. The resolution provided a much needed contribution from the United Nations to the analysis of emerging issues in public administration and development, and marked a turning point in the very perilous trends that advocated a minimalistic State and thus contributed to widening the gap between the rich and the poor, the skilled and unskilled, the powerful and the weak. The resolutions pointed to the need to implant robust systems of public administration and finance into government operations as a means to reverse socio-economic inequalities, foster economic growth and slow down environmental degradation.

3. The *World Development Report*, prepared by the World Bank in 1997 on the theme, "The State in a changing world", provided further analytical support for the notion that a strong, efficient, transparent and accountable administration is a key factor in economic development.

4. The approaching millennium poses challenges that are becoming starkly apparent as countries attempt to adjust to the evolving trends in economic, social and political reality. Each of these trends, such as globalization, urbanization and the information age, provides both a challenge and an opportunity. The extent to which the citizens of a country are able to take advantage of these emerging trends depends in large part on government policies and actions. Will citizens flourish in the global economy or be marginalized? Will citizens take advantage of the expanding availability of information and networking or will they be increasingly isolated from global trends? Will citizens find themselves drawn into conflicts based on local and regional jealousies or will they focus on future cooperation among neighbours? The United Nations must encourage global discussion of these emerging issues, and indeed must promote capacity-building to enable Member States and their citizens to participate in global opportunities.

5. Following the Charter of the United Nations and responding to evolving circumstances, the United Nations fosters dialogue among Member States on how to optimize national and global opportunities. The series of world conferences and summits have articulated an emerging consensus on various policy issues, but fundamental to national progress is the institutional and managerial capacity to formulate and implement national strategies and programmes. In resolution 50/225, the Assembly thus recognized the importance of assisting Governments in building the necessary capabilities to implement the commitments made at the major conferences. Increasingly, the focus is not only on the actions of the Government itself but also on evaluating the conditions for the involvement of a productive private sector and a vital civil society.

6. Many Governments have been reforming the legal framework in their societies. In some countries, such reform is still part of the process of transition to a market economy, creating and sometimes revisiting commercial, business and professional regulations, as well as human rights and laws registering civic associations. In other cases, Governments are attempting to harmonize their national legal frameworks with trends in the global and regional economies, international standards or the emergence of newly active segments of society. The elaboration and enforcement of a constitution and/or laws constitute a framework for government, organizational and personal action. By providing for social peace, political stability and economic development, the constitution and various government and social institutions establish a platform for people's activities.

7. The Thirteenth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance (New York, 27 May–4 June 1997) focused on issues of redesigning the State and modernizing State institutions to face the new emerging challenges. Although some Governments have focused redesign on reducing the role of government, the meeting noted that a strong proactive State is necessary to promote social justice, ensure universal access to quality services, and safeguard the rule of law and respect for human rights, within the context of Assembly resolution 50/225. A strong State is required to lobby for the poor and for the future, neither of which have an adequate voice. The need to redesign a strong strategic State does not entail "big government". It is fully compatible with steps that encourage cost-consciousness, fiscal responsibility and sound financial management. What it does require, however, are properly organized and duly equipped public administration systems, encompassing structures and policies that can attract, retain, develop and motivate high-calibre personnel.

8. A series of ad hoc meetings of experts in all regions organized in the past two years identified the need for reinforcing the integrity and the knowledge base of public

services. Professionalism, merit and an enforceable code of ethics are essential aspects of a much needed campaign to restore and enhance the image of the public service. In resolution 50/225, the Assembly recognized the need for a judicious combination of institution-building and human resource development; these ad hoc meetings of experts filled in the details, for example, concerning the necessary content of training and the mechanisms for ensuring integrity of government operations. The meetings also pointed out the usefulness of transparency institutions, such as ombudsman offices, administrative courts, corruption-fighting offices and citizen-based policy dialogues.

9. Modernizing government operations involves the use of technology and the establishment of open communications between government and stakeholders. The use of modern information technology can make operations more efficient and speedy ("doing it right"), but it is through communication among stakeholders that decisions are taken about "the right things to do". The process of reviewing the "design of the State" allows an opportunity to examine necessary tasks, the appropriate sectors for task responsibility, and methods and partnerships for achieving the objectives.

10. The Fourteenth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance (New York, 6–31 July 1998) concentrated on the important role of stimulating progressive policy decisions and ensuring effective policy implementation. These tasks involve monitoring, recording and analysis of data, and feedback to policy makers and implementers. More specifically, the experts suggested strict methods of financial and operational monitoring, as well as wide consultations among citizens on issues of service delivery. Both bureaucratic monitoring and citizen consultation involve considerable decentralization, with increased efforts at the local if not grass-roots levels. To achieve better social service delivery, some Governments are instituting alternative mechanisms, such as contracting out to the private sector or to non-governmental organizations. Concurrently, Governments are developing better mechanisms for performance monitoring and performance management. Increasingly, Governments are researching best practices in order to benchmark their efforts to higher standards. Thus, every programme and practice becomes a learning situation in which to compare and reduce the gap between current and preferred performance levels.

11. The Fourteenth Meeting of Experts emphasized the need to develop ways to circulate performance measurement information among public administrators, responsible bodies and the public in order to enhance accountability, programme performance and cost-effectiveness, noting that effective governance involves opening access to information on government performance to bureaucrats, elected officials (especially in legislatures) and the public at large. This principle applies to the processes and results of not only the executive but also the legislature and the judicial system.

12. Furthermore, performance management needs to be linked to systems, such as budgeting, accounting, auditing, strategic planning, internal management and client communication systems. When applied to current operations, performance management systems need to include full-cost accounting and strategic planning, thereby linking current operations to past and future operations. Indeed, to be fully futuristic, performance indicators need to be people-centred in order to measure progress towards sustainable development.

13. The analytical and policy discussions in 1997 and 1998 that took place in the context of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Meetings of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance have further elaborated on the themes raised in Assembly resolution 50/225, and have provided a more focused direction for the activities of the United Nations Secretariat in public administration and finance, under the general umbrella of the provisions of paragraph 13 of the resolution.

14. The reform measures taken by the Secretary-General in 1997 with respect to the economic and social field have affected in a positive manner the work of the Secretariat in the implementation of Assembly resolution 50/225. The integration of support for policy formulation, analytical and normative functions, and relevant technical cooperation activities in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will facilitate the interface between the intergovernmental policy dialogue in the area of public administration and development and the relevant technical cooperation activities carried out by the Secretariat and the other organizations of the United Nations system. It will also strengthen the role of the programme both as a repository of data and information on the public sector and as a hub for the global exchange of information on policies, best practices and methods among Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions. As indicated in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999 (A/52/303), which was approved by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, activities in public administration and development in implementation of Assembly resolution 50/225 are carried out within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat by its Division for Public Economics and Public Administration.

15. As a result of the reform measures, the activities of the Secretariat in the field of public administration and finance were integrated with the other core components of the economic and social sector, such as sustainable development, social development, population, advancement of women etc., thus adding the dimension of institutional strengthening, management improvement and human resources development to these components.

16. The new institutional set-up for the activities in public administration and finance will also give rise to greater synergies in the context of the integrated follow-up to the United Nations global conferences in response to the provisions of paragraph 10 of Assembly resolution 50/225. In fact, apart from being a global gathering in itself, the resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly demonstrated the cross-cutting nature of public administration inasmuch as most of the recommendations adopted at the global conferences are directed to Governments and imply a pattern of demands on the State and on public administration. They cover virtually all of the subjects that are the responsibilities of government and provide a framework in which public institutions have to operate. The mechanisms of response of Governments to the mandates of the global conferences range from institutional reform to management reform, decentralization and innovation in service delivery. The activities in public administration within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs through policy analysis, dissemination of best practices and information, and technical cooperation provide valuable inputs relating to these mechanisms in connection with the work on follow-up to conferences carried out by the various components of the economic and social sector within the Secretariat.

II. Activities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

17. In paragraph 13 of its resolution 50/225, the General Assembly charted out the areas in which the United Nations should focus its activities and the modalities to be employed, namely pooling and facilitating access to information in public administration; promoting training and research in public administration and finance at all levels; advocacy and exchange of experience; advisory services; technical assistance; capacity-building; and human resources development.

18. In response to the resolution, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has given priority to the collection and dissemination of basic data on public administration and finance for policy formulation and implementation with a view to assisting Member States in basic government functions: preparation of long-term strategies, policy formulation, programme management and service delivery. It has also increased its advocacy work along the lines suggested by the General Assembly through the organization of global, regional and national conferences, seminars and workshops, and through the dissemination of technical materials and publications. Technical assistance activities have focused on policy advice to Governments on needs assessment, assistance in programme design and formulation, and in substantive support to nationally executed projects in close collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

19. In particular, through the use of information technology, an Internet Web site has been established for the purpose of facilitating access to information, customizing and disseminating best practices, providing an international forum for exchange of experiences, providing on-line advisory services and technical advice, and maintaining a global network of institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, which cooperate with the Secretariat in this field. Through this facility, the Department will thus be able to cover a wide spectrum of its mandate in an interactive, inexpensive, immediate, multidisciplinary and multidimensional fashion.

20. A sampling is set out below of the activities carried out by the Department to illustrate the types and scopes of conferences, ad hoc meetings, publications and advisory services that have been undertaken since the adoption of Assembly resolution 50/225.

Strengthening government capacity for policy development

21. In May 1998, the Department carried out an advisory mission to review with the Brazilian Government the reform and modernization of key policy coordination units within the Presidency of the Republic. In addition, the mission also reviewed the state modernization programme being carried out by the Ministry of Federal Administration and State Reform and the national programme in support of the Brazilian states in fiscal administration and fiscal reform. The programme is funded by the Inter-American Development Bank and implemented by the Government with the assistance of UNDP.

Administrative restructuring

22. The study *Aspects méthodologiques de la réforme des fonctions publiques africaines: Le cas des pays*

francophones au sud du Sahara, containing technical papers and outcomes of a special panel on administrative reform in francophone Africa, was published in 1998. This panel was held during the Thirteenth Meeting of the Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance in June 1997. Its objective was to share different experiences of administrative reforms carried out in sub-Saharan francophone Africa in order to identify success and failure factors and to reflect on conditions that would assure successful reforms in the future. On October 1996 in Sweden, the Department, in collaboration with UNDP, organized the Global Forum on Innovative Policies in Local Government. The Forum, a follow-up activity to Assembly resolution 50/225, recognized the importance of a transfer of power to local government and improvement of civil society. Its focus was primarily to review organizational, managerial and financial issues, as well as to achieve increased participation of civil society for the advancement of social and development goals and democracy.

Civil service reform

23. A regional conference on the theme "Public service in transition: enhancing its role, professionalism and ethical standards and values" was held in Greece, November 1997. The purpose of the conference was to provide a forum for 21 countries in Central and Eastern Europe to discuss approaches to strengthening the professional core, performance and integrity of the civil service. The participants discussed the enormous political, economic and social transformation that the region is experiencing as countries embark on reforms from a one-party to a pluralistic State and a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy. The conference was hosted by the Government of Greece and organized by the Department, in cooperation with the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. In December 1997 at Brasilia, the Department organized a colloquium on the theme "Promoting ethics in the public service" for about 300 high-level, federal and state Brazilian civil servants. The purpose of the colloquium was to discuss pertinent issues and make suggestions to the Brazilian Council of State Reform for launching a national ethics initiative in the public service.

Human resources development

24. In 1998, the Department published "Changing perspectives on human resources development", a report of the Expert Group Meeting on Human Resources Development in the Public Sector. The report combines selected reports of the Secretary-General, reports of related past meetings, the deliberations of the Expert Group and several case studies. It emphasizes enabling conditions and appropriate processes to prepare people for work rather than providing a "blueprint" approach to be mechanically applied to particular human resources problems.

Public administration training

25. In May 1996, a demonstration training programme was developed for a project in which the Department assisted the Government of Thailand in strengthening the capacity of local government officials at the *Tambon* or subdistrict level. This upstream activity was intended to assist in implementing a piece of legislation that decentralized authority and responsibility to the *Tambon* level in order to enable people to participate more extensively in the development process. One of the innovative aspects of the training programme was bringing central government representatives to negotiate with *Tambon* council officials concerning planning and budgeting for the *Tambon*, through exchanging views and perspectives on the eradication of poverty and developing a common understanding of opportunities for and constraints to development. The Department is cooperating with the state of Bahia, Brazil, in the establishment of an international centre of innovation and exchange in public administration. The centre will work to foster South-South cooperation by facilitating access to information on innovative, administrative and management techniques; promote training at all levels, advocacy and exchange of experience; and provide advisory services, technical assistance, capacity-building and human resources development.

Improving performance in the public sector

26. A training workshop was held in December 1997 on the theme "Budget reform in developing countries" to review recent developments in this field and their practical application in developing countries. The workshop discussed the gradual shift to budgeting outputs and outcomes as well as expenditures, but also highlighted the concern that the best practices of the developed countries are not necessarily good models for developing countries. Nevertheless, fundamental reforms in budgeting and accounting classifications and procedures are needed in most developing countries, together with computerization and integration of financial management systems. In a similar vein, the Department also organized the International Symposium on Advanced Information, Technology and Governance in June 1996 in China. The objective of the Symposium was to foster awareness and appreciation in developing countries of the advanced state of the art of information technologies for the improvement of performance in the public sector. It also

dealt with management issues concerning the use of information technology, such as policy, strategy, planning and methodologies; re-engineering and restructuring public administration; and accessing internationally available information resources in a global information society.

Financial management (transparency and accountability)

27. The Twelfth Joint United Nations/International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions Seminar on Government Fraud, Corruption and Mismanagement was held at Vienna in October 1996. About 50 delegates from developing nations, supreme audit institutions in developed nations and international organizations participated. In a series of papers, institutions reported on their experiences, sharing their insight into the tasks, duties and options of government auditing in the fight against corruption and prevention of mismanagement, and acquainting them with the many different challenges and tasks encountered in this area. In June 1997 in New York, the Department organized its first on-line ad hoc expert group meeting, on the theme "Effecting transparency and accountability in government financial management", held over the Internet for auditors-general and accountants-general of eight African countries to consider improved accounting, auditing and financial controls. Participants accessed on-line comments, papers and the bulletin board, and were invited on a "Web tour" of interesting and relevant resources on the meeting's topics. A number of Departments have approached the Division with a view to following similar formats for their own meetings and conferences.

Public-private interaction

28. In January 1997, about a dozen countries were represented at an international conference on performance contracting at New Delhi to share experience in meeting the challenges of a large public enterprise sector providing goods and services to the public inefficiently. They reached the conclusion that performance contracting was an important and useful tool in improving public enterprise performance, regardless of whether the sector was scheduled for privatization. The event was sponsored by the Centre for Economic and Industrial Research at New Delhi, with inputs from UNDP headquarters, the Commonwealth secretariat and the World Bank.

Social development

29. The Department published *Social Management: Some Strategic Issues* in 1996. The publication covers critical subjects, such as the emergence of a new paradigm in management, the redesigning of the State, the implementation of social policies, participation and training social managers. The publication *Towards a New Paradigm for State Action in the Social Sphere* was also published during this period. It outlined guidelines for an action plan for the strengthening of public administration and the management of social policies.

Developing infrastructure and protecting the environment

30. In May 1998, the Department jointly organized with the Tokyo metropolitan government a world conference on the theme "International cooperation of cities and citizens for cultivating an eco-society" at Tokyo. The conference provided an opportunity for all interested parties worldwide to discuss their roles, responsibilities and modalities in fostering mutual cooperation and solidarity in creation of an eco-society on a global scale. These endeavours are fully consonant with the recommendations of Agenda 21, which was adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, and the outcome of other related United Nations conferences.

Government legal capacity (democratic legal and judiciary reforms)

31. A project in Uzbekistan was undertaken on democratization, human rights and governance aimed at enhancing human rights through institutional and human resources capacity-building. Project technical assistance activities are enabling the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights to create an office of an ombudsman and a national centre for human rights. Citizens will have increased access to legal advice and assistance through the creation of a prototypical and replicable legal aid society. Judicial and legal professionals will also enhance their capacity to communicate with each other and gain access to information. The Department and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) jointly organized a major Africa-wide Conference on governance in Africa at ECA headquarters at Addis Ababa in March 1998. Conference deliberations touched on a wide range of issues relevant to the consolidation of the institutional foundations of good governance in Africa, including the fundamental issues of the nature and objective of good governance; the nature and role of the State; key governance institutions; civil society; and related issues of the military, elections, the opposition, women, decentralization and the media. In addition to examining these issues in detail, the conference debated the question of how to manage political transitions in a manner

that facilitates the achievement of good governance. Great emphasis was placed on the need to enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of the State as a necessary condition for economic development and the strengthening of good governance.

Strengthening civil society

32. In line with the Azerbaijan Government's commitment to achieve the establishment of civil society and within the framework of UNDP Programme for Democracy, Governance and Participation, the Department has been implementing the Non-Governmental Organizations Development Project since 1997. The overarching goal of the project is to accelerate the development of civil society through support to and capacity-building of non-governmental and community-based organizations. This goal is being achieved through the establishment of a non-governmental organizations resource and training centre, which is a management and technical support facility that provides much needed advice, assistance, training, equipment, information and know-how in ways that promote cooperation, networking, and cooperative interaction with Governments and among the non-governmental organizations community.

Post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction of government machinery

33. The Department has been executing a major project on the post-conflict reconstruction of government machinery in Rwanda. Funded by UNDP and involving 10 major agencies, the programmes "Strengthening the management capacity of the State for economic development" and "Rehabilitation of the justice system" have set up local government structures, recruited senior civil servants, reorganized all central government ministries, restructured the government pay system, and trained judges and set up a justice infrastructure, among other activities in Rwanda. Based on the work of the past four years, the Department has formulated a comprehensive, national governance programme aimed at developing full ownership by the Government of Rwanda.

Management of development programmes

34. The Department managed a series of regional workshops in 1996 and 1997 on the theme "Management of development: national capacity strengthening". Sponsored by UNDP headquarters and the United Nations Staff College Project, these workshops were held in Africa and Asia for high-level managers from national institutions responsible for the management of development from various countries in the region. The aim of the workshops was to promote networking among participants, facilitating exchange of training material, experience and expertise.

III. Activities of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

35. In paragraph 18 of its resolution 50/225, the General Assembly recommended that the Secretary-General ensure maximum coordination of the activities of the United Nations system in the field of public administration and development. It also called upon the Secretary-General to ensure ways of strengthening the coordination, coherence and harmonization of the management and implementation of the operational activities of the United Nations system in the field of public administration and development.

36. The reform measures carried out by the Secretary-General and adopted by the General Assembly in 1997 provide a clear framework for allocation of responsibilities in the area of public administration and finance for development among the various entities of the United Nations system, particularly between the United Nations Secretariat and the funds and programmes. This framework also constitutes a solid basis on which to build cooperative initiatives and activities. According to this framework, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will concentrate on (a) supporting standing political and ad hoc processes for the development of integrated policy responses to emerging issues in this field; (b) providing substantive secretariat services and support to intergovernmental bodies addressing governance and public finance issues; (c) promoting and monitoring the implementation and coordinated follow-up to General Assembly resolution 50/225; (d) analysing emerging trends and issues in this field; (e) promoting global and collective approaches to address governance, institutional and management development issues in support of economic and social development; (f) serving as a forum for the exchange of information, lessons and experiences among Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions; (g) facilitating the translation of global policies, strategies and programmes at the country level, as well as feeding back lessons learned and experiences gained at the country level into the global policy development process; (h) supporting the Secretary-General in enhancing policy coherence and coordination in this field both within the United Nations and among United Nations system organizations; (i) increasing awareness of and disseminating United Nations work in this field, including

facilitation of access to United Nations electronic information; and (j) providing technical assistance to developing countries in the form of advisory services and policy advice, technical and substantive support services to UNDP-funded projects, particularly in the context of national execution.

37. The funds and programmes will concentrate on (a) planning, programming and implementation of programmes and projects in the area of governance, public administration and finance for development; (b) coordination of United Nations activities at the country level; (c) mobilization of resources for and funding of programmes and projects in this field; (d) ensuring that the country development assistance framework takes fully into account the recommendations of the General Assembly contained in resolution 50/225.

38. The clearer distribution of functions that has emerged from the reform process has facilitated the elimination of duplications, promoted operative synergies between the work of the organizations involved and engendered a new spirit of cooperation. Another concrete step in the implementation of the provisions of Assembly resolution 50/225 was taken on the occasion of the inter-agency meeting held in connection with the Fourteenth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance (the inter-agency meeting is an event that has accompanied all previous Meetings of Experts). At the last meeting in May 1998, the agencies of the United Nations system active at various levels in activities covered by Assembly resolution 50/225 agreed to establish a standing consultative mechanism in the form of regular consultative meetings to coordinate the respective activities in this field. The first of these meetings will take place in the last quarter of 1998, and will cover the following agenda:

(a) Review of respective programmes for 1999;

(b) Coordination of activities to be included in the respective biennial budgets for the years 2000–2001;

(c) Coordinated follow-up to Assembly resolution 50/225;

(d) Sharing of data on the public sector;

(e) Relationship between electronic databases and Web pages;

(f) Participation in joint programming exercises under the umbrella of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

39. A comprehensive summary is set out below of the activities carried out by the organizations of the United Nations system pursuant to the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 50/225.

A. Centre for International Crime Prevention

40. The initiatives of the Centre for International Crime Prevention related to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/225 on public administration and development are mainly connected to the activities undertaken to prevent and fight corruption and bribery. In the last two years the Centre has taken needs assessment and advisory missions to ascertain the specific requirements of Governments facing the challenge of corruption in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Guinea, Lebanon, Mozambique, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Centre has undertaken several technical assistance activities, such as training seminars for law enforcement officers, judges and prosecutors, and the elaboration of projects aimed at providing requesting Member States with the legislative and institutional capacity to control the phenomenon of corruption, particularly by drafting new legislation or revising existing legislation, establishing special anti-corruption bodies and organizing public awareness campaigns.

41. The Centre elaborated two projects to strengthen the criminal justice systems in Bosnia and Herzegovina. An anti-corruption project is being implemented in Romania for anti-corruption institution-building in the country. In response to the request submitted by the Lebanese authorities on strengthening institutional capacities to control corruption, the Centre elaborated a project proposal that aims to provide Lebanon with the legislative and institutional means to prevent and control the phenomenon of corruption and associated organized criminality. One component of the project in support of the national crime prevention strategy of South Africa is also related to the prevention and fight of corruption in that country. The Centre also convened a meeting of experts from all regions at Buenos Aires to consider ways of improving international cooperation against the phenomenon of corruption. The Centre organized the African Regional Ministerial Workshop on Organized Crime and Corruption at Senegal in July 1997, and the Asia Regional Ministerial Meeting on Transitional Crime in the Philippines in March 1998.

42. In cooperation with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, the Centre has worked on the elaboration of a model law against corruption that contains

provisions designed to assist Member States to prevent, detect and fight corruption in a more effective way. The Centre is in the process of revising the manual on practical measures against corruption to include the text of the International Code of Conduct for Public Officials, the United Nations Declaration against Corruption and Bribery in International Commercial Transactions, and other relevant instruments, such as the Organization of American States and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development conventions.

B. Economic Commission for Africa

43. The strategic objectives of the development management programme are to enhance the productivity and accountability of the public sector, support the efforts of the private sector in promoting economic growth, and encourage popular participation in development through strengthening of civil society. In pursuance of these objectives, ECA has designed and implemented a number of activities. Its research studies, in particular, have generated material focusing on best practices in development management, public service reform, ethics and accountability, and trends in public service retrenchment and human resource management.

44. In recognition of the vital role of small- and medium-scale enterprises (SME) in development, ECA has concentrated its efforts on defining programmes that allow microenterprises access to equity capital and credit. A study produced by ECA reviewed microfinancing practices and constraints, assessed policies and strategies, and outlined ways in which Governments, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, informal sector groups and small-scale enterprises might work together to tackle identified problems. A complementary project, aimed at promoting the development of the informal sector, was financed by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*. Its main feature is the development of linkages among different institutions to enhance the capacity of the informal sector.

45. In response to the strong demand for enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations, ECA organized a series of seminars and workshops at the national and regional levels aimed at exposing civil society actors to policy analysis techniques. In collaboration with non-governmental and voluntary organizations, ECA established and is currently hosting the African Center for Civil Society, which essentially provides information-sharing and networking services.

46. ECA provides advisory and training services under the regular programme of technical cooperation for the benefit of Member States, local government and decentralization bodies, and the secretariats of subregional economic groupings (particularly the Economic Community of West African States, the Common Market for East and Southern African States and the Southern Africa Development Community).

47. At the request of Member States, ECA has designed a major project focusing on the development of customer standards for service delivery agencies in the public sector, and the promotion of customer service orientation among public servants generally.

48. ECA has been able to implement its programmes as a result of the cooperation it received from the partnership it forged with other agencies within the United Nations system. Particular reference needs to be made to the work jointly carried out with UNDP (in organizing the first annual governance forum, as well as the African investment forum held at Accra in 1997), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (conference on consolidating the institutional foundations for good governance), the Global Coalition for Africa Transition and Economic Development); and the World Health Organization (project on the role of local government in health-care delivery).

C. Economic Commission for Europe

49. The work programme of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) does not explicitly cover the area of public administration, but a number of its activities are directed to public administration in its areas of competence. The Commission contributes to the improvement of public administration through the elaboration of norms and guidelines in various areas to be implemented by Governments, and through the provision of technical assistance to promote their effective implementation in countries with economies in transition.

50. ECE carries out research, analysis and projections on economic situations and developments in Europe and North America, with special emphasis on countries with economies in transition. The results, published in the *Economic Survey of Europe*, are used by economic advisers to ministers as well as central banks, and serve as a basis for policy debates in which decision makers participate. The Commission organized a one-day seminar on the theme "Enterprise and bank restructuring in the transition economies", which was attended by a wide range of senior economists, government officials and academics from ECE member States.

51. As the international focal point for trade facilitation standards and recommendations, ECE develops instruments to reduce and automate procedures and paperwork. The Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport develops and maintains the only international standard for electronic data interchange (Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport) between public administrations and private companies of all economic sectors worldwide.

52. In the field of trade and investment promotion, ECE's focus has been on the dissemination of best practices in investment promotion techniques, the promotion of private investment in infrastructure (road, rail, telecommunications, power generating networks, water systems etc.) and stimulation of investment in real estate. A forum on prospects for promoting foreign direct investments in the transition economies was organized in September 1997 at Geneva.

53. In the field of SME development, a programme for countries with economies in transition has continued to be implemented to assist these countries in formulating national SME policy, designing promotion programmes, developing the relevant infrastructure and helping new entrepreneurs. The programme is focused on collecting and disseminating statistics and information on legislation and promotional measures; developing information networks; preparing case studies and information materials on SME development issues; formulating project proposals; providing advisory services; and training.

D. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

54. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, through the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning, organized a number of workshops and training courses relating to themes covered by Assembly resolution 50/225. The courses were directed at officials of central and local governments, and covered such issues as public policy development and management; regional development management; decentralization and municipal administration; formulation, management and evaluation of development projects.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

55. Most activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) fall into the following categories: (a) enhancing governmental capacity for economic and social policy making through exchange of experiences on the best practices; (b) increasing the skills of public administration officials; and (c) strengthening governmental institutions. Activities implemented by ESCAP in the areas mentioned in paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 50/225 are set out below.

Strengthening governmental capacity for policy development

56. A national workshop on economic reform was held in Viet Nam, covering policy analysis, macroeconomic reforms and macroeconomic models, and aiming to enhance the capacity of relevant government officials of Viet Nam in making use of macroeconomic models for policy analysis, based on experience in China and India. A consultative meeting on the identification of institutional constraints of selected ESCAP least developed countries in implementing macroeconomic policies and lessons from East and South-East Asian countries, held at Bangkok from 2 to 4 April 1997, enabled an exchange of experiences between government officials from 10 least developed countries of the region, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, and formulated a set of recommendations for strengthening institutions responsible for macroeconomic policy-making in least developed countries.

Financial management

57. A regional meeting on improved management of the financial sector held at Bangkok from 20 to 22 May 1998 invited officials from central banks of 14 member countries, including nine from countries with economies in transition from central planning to a market oriented system, to discuss current practices, and formulated recommendations for improved financial sector management.

Improving performance in the public sector

58. A training programme on project preparation and appraisal with an environmental impact assessment component held at Dhaka provided training of about 25 officials of various economic ministries of Bangladesh on the techniques of project preparation and appraisal, including assessment of environmental impact.

Public-private interaction

59. At a policy-level seminar on commercialization and private sector involvement in ports held at Chittagong, Bangladesh, on 18 June 1997, public-sector officials associated with port administration of several member countries were sensitized, with the help of resources persons, on the various modalities of private-sector involvement in the area of building, maintenance and operation of ports. A subregional workshop on public participation for electricity generation project, held at Bangkok from 19 to 24 November 1997, invited public-sector officials from the countries of the Mekong Delta region to examine possible modalities for increased community involvement in designing electricity generating projects for making such projects more beneficial to the public at large.

Social development

60. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) project "Seven sisters: district development coordination and improved policy project design", involving six SAARC countries, was conducted from March 1996 to March 1997. The project created and operationalized pilot district-level institutions to enhance dialogue and cooperation among government agencies, non-government organizations and beneficiaries to improve the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programmes. A regional seminar on Government-non-governmental organizations cooperation for older persons, held at Macau from 16 to 19 June 1997, brought together representatives of government and non-government agencies involved in implementing programmes for older persons from 17 member countries, and formulated a set of follow-up actions for increasing cooperation between the agencies for exploiting synergies between programmes.

Developing infrastructure and protecting the environment

61. A subregional expert group meeting on integrating environmental considerations into economic policy-making processes for South Asia, held at Colombo from 24 to 26 November 1997, invited selected government officials associated with formulating and implementing environmental policy in six South Asian countries and other experts to identify best practices in the subregion, and formulated a set of recommendations for the integration of environmental considerations into economic policy-making.

F. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

62. Following the adoption of the Midrand Declaration and Partnership for Growth and Development by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) at its ninth session, the work of UNCTAD is, *inter alia*, based on the recognition that market and private initiatives are important dynamic agents of an expanding economy, without losing sight of the determining influence of good governance and an efficient but reduced role of the State.

63. As part of the overall democratic processes necessary for sustaining growth and development, good governance requires the presence of efficient management of resources. Some notable examples are set out below of the activities that contribute to the above-mentioned processes as part of the overall UNCTAD mandate.

Efficient customs management

64. Activities are undertaken to foster a more efficient customs administration that will be able to clear foreign trade operations efficiency in a minimum period of time, and that reduces cost for warehousing, thus making the national economy more competitive.

Strengthening public administration by creating a positive environment for investment

65. Assistance is provided to investment countries that have liberalized their foreign investment policies and are keen to ensure the effectiveness of their policy reforms, as well as determine how they should be formulated and implemented. Investment policy reviews are conducted in an open and transparent manner with the private sector of the country concerned to enable government officials to administer direct investments in a liberalized environment with modern and innovative management techniques.

Capacity-building for participation in multilateral trading system

66. Existing synergies between UNCTAD and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are further developed in this area. Promoting an internationally competitive and efficient service infrastructure for trade and development, as well as advisory services in such fields as investment, competition, technology, trade and entrepreneurship, are important factors for good governance.

Debt management

67. UNCTAD has developed appropriate administrative, institutional and legal structures for effective debt management, including the setting up of an adequate information system, with detailed and aggregated data on loan contracts, past and future disbursements, and past and future debt-service payments, in particular the national capacity to define and select appropriate debt strategies, and to improve national capacity to record grants and projects financed through external resources, contributing to good governance of financial resources and obligations of the nation.

Management of mineral resources

68. Activities are undertaken in this area that can generate sustainable benefits for the countries in which they are located.

Action-oriented development strategies for Africa

69. Implementation of projects that will promote investment and exports, and stimulate regional dynamics, including helping to build capacities of African policy makers in designing and implementing new development strategies.

Promotion of private investment flows to the least developed countries

70. This involves activities related to the use of the mechanism of investment funds (country funds, venture capital funds or specific sectoral investment funds) to attract foreign investment flows in least developed countries. Issues addressed include investment opportunities in least developed countries; obstacles to investment and measures to reduce these obstacles; and last but not least, how the international community, including international organizations, can help to reduce obstacles and promote investment in least developed countries.

G. United Nations Development Programme

71. UNDP undertook the piloting and researching of new approaches and methodologies in public administration and its relationship to civil society as a whole. At the global level, key achievements can be divided into three categories: (a) new tools and methodologies that were devised to assist the implementation of UNDP country policy on governance; (b) UNDP's involvement in cross-fertilization of experiences on governance and public administration; and (c) partnership founded with other players in governance.

New tools and methodologies

72. Several publications were issued on the various facets of governance and sustainable human development. One of the most significant documents is the policy paper that outlines UNDP's approach on human rights, which is meant as a tool to integrate human rights and sustainable human development. UNDP has published discussion papers on reconceptualizing governance; corruption and good governance; and debt management. In the field of decentralization and local governance, UNDP has published a technical advisory paper entitled "Participatory local governance", which analyses processes, methods and experience of participatory approaches to improved local governance.

73. UNDP developed a resource book that compiles all major resource material on capacity development and serves as a one-stop source to better understand capacity development, and describes how to set up and run capacity development programmes. In the attempt to link governance experts from the world, an electronic mailing list was set up to stimulate discussion, ask questions and seek answers on issues related to governance and public administration, as well as building the capacity of public reform efforts, of government and of public management professionals.

74. In cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP contributed to a forthcoming study and policy review on the informal sector and job generation in urban areas. The urban development team began an ongoing survey that attempts to establish the track record of South-South and North-South development cooperation between cities in the context of globalization and decentralization.

Cross-fertilization of experience

75. UNDP sponsored a global conference on governance for sustainable growth and equity whose participants included ministers, parliamentarians, mayors and civil society forums, for which it produced a report, immediately followed by an international colloquium of mayors. Other conferences dealt with trade and least developed countries, trade and sustainable human development, and fractured communities. UNDP organized a global workshop on the Programme on Accountability and Transparency, and jointly coordinated with OECD a workshop on corruption in Paris, bringing together 90 participants, mainly from the donor community, as well as corruption and anti-corruption

practitioners from Africa, Asia and Latin America. UNDP was actively involved with WTO in the preparation of a high-level conference on trade and developing countries, which was supported and attended by the International Trade Centre, UNCTAD, UNDP and the World Bank. A conference was sponsored by UNDP and UNCTAD on debt management, attended by participants from more than 80 countries. UNDP participated in an urban poverty forum and a technical consultation on decentralization.

76. UNDP promoted cross-fertilization of experiences in governance by chairing the sub-task force on capacity-building for governance, which was part of the United Nations Task Force on an Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development, and was mandated to enhance inter-agency coordination at the country level in support of implementation of national governance strategies and action plans for poverty eradication. The sub-task force was also mandated to pay particular attention to the strategies and action plans adopted at the World Summit for Social Development.

77. In the area of urban development, UNDP participated and contributed substantially to various international events, such as an international forum on urban poverty held at Florence. UNDP was invited to a conference in Washington, D.C., to advise on the future activities and shape of the global urban Research Initiative network of researchers in urban governance. The African Congress on HIV/AIDS created the Network of African Mayors against HIV/AIDS, and the UNDP/HIV programme supported its first conference at Abidjan in 1997.

Partnerships

78. UNDP forged partnerships and pursued joint projects with several organizations. Memoranda of understanding were signed with, *inter alia*, the American Bar Association and the International Union of Local Authorities. UNDP pursued closer working relations with bilateral agencies, such as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. UNDP developed a close working corporate-wide partnership within the United Nations system, such as with UNCTAD on globalization, liberalization and sustainable human development. The partnership with UNCTAD led to a programme that will develop into 10 concrete country programmes aimed at assisting and enabling 10 countries in integrating into the global economy and hence reaping the benefits of integration.

H. International Labour Organization

79. The objective of ILO activities in public administration and development is to strengthen the capacity of labour administrations to design and implement effective policies for the protection of workers and the efficient functioning of labour markets. There has been a trend over the past two biennia for member States to request more wide-ranging assistance, covering the whole gamut of services and activities of labour administration systems, rather than single operational services, such as labour inspection and public employment services.

80. In the field of institutional and management capacity-building, the ILO has provided assistance to constituents through a series of audits of ministries of labour and labour administration systems, carried out in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea and Zimbabwe in 1997 by ILO experts, in close cooperation with the staff of labour administrations. These exercises often lead to the development of proposals for technical cooperation projects to assist in the implementation of reforms and capacity-building activities and training of labour administration staff.

81. Further support was provided to member States in the form of technical advisory services in Brazil, Chile, the Niger and Yemen, and national technical cooperation projects in Azerbaijan and Bulgaria. The assistance provided to the Baltic States and Slovakia produced some encouraging results. Through national seminars, training and policy advice, the focus in these countries was widened from labour inspection and safety and health issues to broader employment policy issues. A tripartite seminar, held at Strasbourg in November 1997 for countries of Eastern and Central Europe on the subject of labour administration as a vector of development, emphasized the need to adapt the system of labour administration to specific national factors, such as the relative strength of the social partners and of tripartite consultation machinery. Information material has been prepared in support of these activities, ranging from an introductory brochure to a detailed database covering labour administration systems in 40 countries. A study was completed on the role of consultation and cooperation bodies in labour administration, showing how in seven countries social dialogue can be maintained, and how responsibility can be shared between public administration and the social partners for the adoption of policies.

82. Technical assistance was provided to a number of countries, including Albania, Jordan, Lebanon, South Africa and Viet Nam, as well as the occupied Arab territories, to help to develop public employment services. Meetings were organized to facilitate the exchange of experiences on employment services, including an interregional technical meeting, convened at Geneva in January 1997 to consider the strategies developed by public employment services in response to structural changes in the labour market; it examined practices of cooperation between public employment services and private employment agencies in Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland. This led to the creation in 1996 of the Public Employment Placement Enterprise in Australia, which now competes for business in a wide range of employment services against other private and community sector organizations.

I. International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization

83. Between May 1996 and May 1998, roughly 10,000 participants benefited from the training offered by the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC/ILO), of whom about 2,000 participated in the training/learning exercises organized by the United Nations Staff College Project. ITC/ILO has played a major role in assisting its constituents, including Governments and social partners, in achieving sustainable development in all countries. Senior government officials and civil servants have traditionally represented the main target group of the training activities of ITC/ILO. Through such training, ITC/ILO has contributed to strengthening Governments' capacity in a wide range of subjects. With more specific reference to the areas recommended by the Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance, training activities have been implemented in order to: (a) strengthen government capacity for civil service reform, human resource development and public administration training; (b) improve the performance in the public sector; (c) improve financial management; (d) support public-private interaction; (e) promote social development; and (f) improve the management of development programmes.

84. The United Nations Staff College Project improved the training programme on the theme "Management of development: national capacity strengthening", in which 41 country teams participated, with a total of 265 team members, including key national and international staff. Through its multifold activities, the Project offered training tailored to specific contexts, aiming at (a) promoting transparent and accountable governance; (b) contributing to capacity-building and improvement of training programmes for the public sector; (c) developing the necessary capabilities to enable public administration to implement the commitments undertaken as a result of the major United Nations conferences; and (d) increasing synergy, cooperation and coordination between United Nations funds and programmes, the specialized agencies, the United Nations Secretariat and the Bretton Woods institutions.

J. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

85. UNESCO has no major activities in the field of public administration and development. However, by promoting education, training and research and facilitating access to information, UNESCO programmes and publications contribute to ensure capacity-building, human resource development and governance in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Its intergovernmental social science programme on the management of social transformation aims to ensure an integrated urban development by carrying out activities on city governance, social sustainability, decentralization and urban development, formulation of urban policies, and gender and environment issues, to provide decision makers with scientific data to improve the management of crisis.

K. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

86. UNIDO activities have supported the development of policy and regulatory framework that are efficient, transparent and accountable. It plays a key role in mediating and promoting dialogue between the public and the private sectors. UNIDO services in this field were aimed at building up institutions capable of formulating and implementing sound industrial policy, facilitating and easing the transition of ownership from public and private enterprise, improving dialogue between the public and private sectors, fostering environmentally sustainable industrial development, and promoting clearer and safer industrial production.

87. UNIDO has assisted Governments in the formulation of national strategies and programmes to promote the development of SMEs by strengthening capabilities to collect and analyse SME sector-related information; developing new or amending existing legislation, regulations and incentives to promote a network of appropriate demand-

driven institutions and support mechanisms; and improving the policy and business regulatory environment of SMEs.

88. UNIDO provides support to the creation of industrial governance for environmentally and socially sustainable industrial development. It assists developing countries in gaining access to environmentally sound technologies, and forms learning networks for building capacities at the institutional, enterprise and professional levels. It has developed a network of investment promotion services in 10 developed and developing countries; and it has established in collaboration with UNEP, a network of national clearer production centres in 10 developing countries. UNIDO regularly conducts training programmes in technology transfer.

89. The following examples illustrate some UNIDO technical cooperation in public administration and development: medium-term industrial strategy in Viet Nam; assistance in the formulation and implementation of an industrial policy in Ecuador; and a support programme for industrial development of the Sumgait region and Azerbaijan. UNIDO has assisted China in township and village enterprise development; assisted Kyrgyzstan in the preparation of a national programme for management of economic and technical change; assisted Bangladesh in rural industrialization employment generation; assisted Cuba in a programme for industrial restructuring; assisted Guatemala in advancing industrial decentralization in three departments; assisted Niger for a programme of decentralization; and assisted Thailand in improving industrial competitiveness and sustainable growth.

90. UNIDO provided advisory services on policies and strategies, and participated in the development of optional solutions, in cooperation with government counterpart ministries and institutions, as follows: Cambodia: micro and small enterprise development for poverty alleviation; Chile: assessment of modernization and diversification of Chilean industry; India: modernization and restructuring of clusters of small and medium scale industries; and Kyrgyzstan: support to small and medium enterprises development.

91. UNIDO is looking into cooperative arrangements with other agencies to create synergies and avoid overlaps. Started in 1996, the process will continue to be enhanced.

L. World Bank

92. The World Bank has focused increasing attention on issues that affect public-sector performance. Of particular note are *The 1997 World Development Report: The State of A Changing World*, and the commitment of the President at the 1996 annual meeting to tackle corruption. Reflecting the importance being attached to these issues and related public sector reform issues, a public sector group was established in mid-1997 within the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network to take forward the expanded agenda for public-sector reform. The 1997 *World Development Report* was notable for the emphasis it placed on "reinvigorating institutional capability" and on the balance of restraint and flexibility as underpinning a well performing public sector.

Anti-corruption

93. A task force established to help develop the Bank's anti-corruption programme produced the report "Helping countries combat corruption, the role of the World Bank" in September 1997. The framework developed in the report has four main thrusts: (a) strengthening the Bank's own projects against corruption and fraud; (b) providing direct assistance to countries that request assistance in tackling corruption; (c) mainstreaming a concern for corruption throughout the Bank's lending and policy work; and (d) supporting international anti-corruption efforts, including the work of OECD and non-governmental organizations, such as Transparency International.

94. Many of the Bank's interventions to streamline the role of the State and improve its functioning and management contribute directly to reducing opportunities and incentives for corruption. A review of the Bank's regional efforts shows that activities are under way in Armenia, Georgia, Latvia and Ukraine. Innovative diagnostic tools have been developed to help to understand the nature of the corruption problem and to set priorities for intervention, and workshops have been organized to bring various stakeholders into the discussion. In the Africa region, six countries have requested assistance, and diagnostic missions and workshops have been undertaken, to be followed by targeted interventions. The South Asia region will undertake economic and sector work across the region to identify manifestations, causes and cures for corruption, with contributions from India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. A detailed action plan for Bangladesh and specific interventions in Nepal are envisioned. The Latin America and Caribbean region will complete anti-corruption studies in Colombia, and will complete mainstream anti-corruption activities in the design of a Guatemala judicial reform project and a proposed Bolivia institutional reform project.

Governance/capacity-building

95. Closely associated with anti-corruption activities, a strategic forum identified an institutional need to focus the Bank's activities on building countries' capacities in the areas of governance, policy-making and policy implementation. Three major activities include: (a) a public-sector reform strategy paper that will suggest new approaches, lending instruments, staffing, and partnerships to increase the Bank's effectiveness; (b) the Public Sector Board will produce a set of tools for use by Bank staff in assessing countries' institutional capacities; and (c) a specific capacity-building initiative will be considered for the Africa region, with potential support by the Bank and other donors. The Bank's outreach on capacity-building will be enhanced through the use of new technologies (such as distance learning) and through new partnerships with learning institutions in developing countries.

96. The Bank has been involved across the full range of activities identified in General Assembly resolution 50/225. In the field of judicial reform, for example, it is estimated that in early 1998, 23 projects supported by the Bank are under way or have been completed, with a further seven planned, ranging from simple studies of the court system in the case of Indonesia and Sierra Leone to major reforms of the judicial branch in Bolivia, the Russian Federation and Venezuela.

97. In the more traditional areas of budget and financial management and civil service reform, major progress has been made in defining a coherent strategy for supporting public-sector reform efforts. These principles underpin the Bank's public expenditure management handbook, which was published in June 1998. The emphasis on institutions and budgetary outcomes has been linked with the decision-making systems and processes at the centre of government. Across all these issues, a comprehensive training programme is being managed by the Economic Development Institute. In the area of civil service reform, a paper titled "Re-thinking civil service reform: an agenda for smart government" was issued in June 1997. Attention has been given to working with countries to help them to understand the institutional environment that fosters well performing public sector organizations.

Knowledge management

98. As part of the Bank's reorganization into networks, a great deal of attention has been given to managing the knowledge available both within and outside the Bank on development issues. There are now in excess of 50 electronic sites, mostly internal at this stage, dealing with specialized topics in development. Within the Bank's Public Sector Group, sites have been developed for public expenditure and corruption, and are under development for decentralization, government reorientation (late civil service reform), institutional analysis and judicial reform.

IV. Conclusions

99. The two years since the adoption of resolution 50/225 by the General Assembly have witnessed a growing volume of analysis, research and experimentation on the role of the State and the public sector in the development process. At the national level, countries have embarked on important reforms of the State and the public sector on the basis of new approaches that aim to balance the need for reducing public budgets with the need for preserving and/or strengthening the capacity of the State to carry out its basic functions and provide its citizens with essential local services. Although Governments have been steadily reducing their involvement in the production of goods and services, they have been focusing their attention on the need to strengthen their capacity to formulate and develop economic and social policies, and on the need to establish appropriate regulatory frameworks and control mechanisms for the operation of the private sector. New partnerships between the public sector, civil society organizations and business have been forged, and innovative ways of delivering public services are being explored.

100. In this thriving environment of reform and innovation, the United Nations must play an important role in facilitating discussions and analysis of these themes at the global, regional and national levels. It must foster the exchange of information on policies, successful practices and innovative experiences. It must also provide developing countries and countries in transition with the necessary policy advice and technical assistance to enhance their capacity to formulate, implement and monitor reform strategies able to contribute to their development efforts. The steps taken in better coordinating the inputs provided by the various organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in the area of public administration and development will no doubt enhance the impact of United Nations activities.

101. The Fourteenth Meeting of the Group of Experts recognized that the effects of change and reform at both the national and international levels in this field cannot be evaluated in the short term. It therefore suggested that a more comprehensive and in-depth review be carried out in the year 2001 (i.e., five years from the adoption of Assembly resolution 50/225) of the changes, trends and developments

in the area of public administration and development, and of national and international measures taken in response to the resolution. The Secretary-General supports this recommendation of the Meeting of Experts, and subject to the approval of the Council and the General Assembly, will include such a review as part of the proposed activities to be carried out by the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the biennium 2000–2001.

UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/53/174
10 July 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-third session
Item 96 (b) of the provisional agenda*

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION: INTEGRATION OF THE ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION INTO THE WORLD ECONOMY

Note verbale dated 10 July 1998 from the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations presents her compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to kindly request that the enclosed article by the President of Turkmenistan H.E. Mr. Saparmurat A. Niyazov be published as an official document of the fifty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly under preliminary agenda item number 96 (b).

The Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations avails herself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretary-General of the United Nations the assurances of her highest consideration.

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ANNEX

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Turkmenistan meets the twenty-first century with hope and faith in itself and mankind

Humanism and practicality are important in relations between States. Regardless of the events that have marked this waning century, the change from one century to another is in itself a very significant historical fact, accompanied by profound transformations in all areas of human existence. Our consciousness, which has been "afflicted" with the future but has not "recovered" from the past, is not unaffected by this.

We all wish to live better tomorrow than yesterday. But, as we know, there are no guaranteed formulas for happiness and prosperity. There is experience, the difficult path of trial and error, and this experience must be internalized so that the forthcoming journey will be both smoother and shorter, leading, first of all, to peace. All the rest, as they say, will come.

THE LESSONS OF HISTORY THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE DAY

The collapse of the Soviet Union had become a historical inevitability. It had been predestined both politically and economically. The downfall of the last empire, which had been postponed for seven decades, in spite of enormous complexities on the whole transpired relatively calmly and in a civilized manner. History, it seems to me, chose the best time for that process, when a situation had arisen in the world making the threat of force and blatant disregard for international law impossible. This was a rare possibility for freely and rationally making use of one's right to self-determination and pursuing one's national interests within the framework of civilized international relations. Today, we are fully justified in stating that Turkmenistan succeeded in utilizing that opportunity.

Very often in world public opinion there is an attempt to portray Turkmenistan as a country whose aspirations and plans to establish a prosperous State are linked exclusively to its very rich natural resources and raw materials. Indeed, our land is very generously endowed with hydrocarbon resources, but one should not think that Turkmenistan intends to acquire wealth only by actively trading in its natural resources.

When we recently met with the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, he told me that Turkmenistan had an excellent chance not to repeat the mistakes made by certain countries that are rich in oil and gas but relied solely on selling resources, without creating the necessary infrastructure for ensuring a dignified life for future generations. Indeed, we are not simply orienting our policies towards a diversified economy, we are actually creating it - a varied economy based on high-level technologies and the principles of self-development.

We have learned the lessons of the former Soviet Union very well in this regard. While, for example, in recent Soviet years only 3 per cent of the cotton grown in Turkmenistan was processed in the Republic, today, after approximately $4 billion was invested in setting up a textile industry, the volume of cotton processing within the country has increased tenfold. New production systems are also being speedily created in other sectors of the processing industry, above all in the area of oil and gas. This year, Turkmenistan is already approaching self-sufficiency in grain and we are expecting a record harvest. In full accordance with the long-term industrial-infrastructure development strategy, the production of sugar has begun, and capacities for water purification and the manufacture of mineral fertilizers and so forth have been established.

But, above all, within the State we have been able to achieve social concord, harmony among national groups and denominations, and trust on the part of the people in the authorities. The fact that we were able practically to avert an economic slump during the collapse of the internal economic links of the former Soviet State also played an important role. Reforming the economy, we moved forward consistently and gradually, which made it possible to avoid many negative consequences, and, above all, maintain strong social protection for the needy sectors of the population. This was done in a manner that is unparalleled in the world, including the free supply to citizens of electrical energy, gas and water and the practically free provision of food to low-income families.

I should like to state frankly that these steps that we have taken have not met with understanding and support everywhere in the world. It is considered that such an approach is detrimental to market principles. I have often told our opponents in this regard that any principle is good as long as it does not turn into its opposite. While principles are principles, there is life itself and its logic does not always and in all respects conform to this or that principle. I ask these opponents of mine this question: "What has the current generation of people done wrong vis-à-vis history, why should they be punished more than they have already been?" I believe, therefore, that human existence should not be approached solely from the criterion of the market. The market will gain ground anyway - mankind has no alternative; but there is, there must be an alternative in choosing the ways to establish a market economy. We selected our own path and already today we see how the mentality of our people is changing, for whom the choice of the market, dictated not only by living conditions but also by one's own possibilities, is becoming natural and organic.

We proceeded on the basis that the transitional period should take a certain amount of time (we determined that it would take 10 years). This period is necessary for society to adapt socially and psychologically to the new conditions inherent in the market economy. At the present time, commercial and industrial enterprises are being rapidly privatized; consumer services are being fully transferred to private ownership; land is being leased or transferred as private property to small farmers; and the equality of all forms of ownership has been guaranteed in practice. The national currency - the manat - has been stabilized. Statistics indicate a steady growth in production, with the fastest rates of increase in the private sector. All this gives grounds for confidence in the State's favourable economic prospects.

I am convinced that the projects that we have undertaken and are conducting with the participation of leading world companies will enable us, making maximum use of our policy's openness, to attain, by 2020, the level of those States which, like Turkmenistan but only considerably earlier than us, started to establish market mechanisms on the basis of their national priorities.

Nevertheless, still with regard to the question of priorities, that is, the global priorities that are being shaped by new historical realities, I should like once again to underscore the question of peace and achieving it in order to carry out domestic development tasks. Although this determinacy has always been part of mankind's philosophical experience, today, it has moved from the philosophical category predicated on a cause and effect nexus to a practical category because peace and the way to achieve it have become a real, attainable means of progress - at both the domestic, national level as well as the worldwide level.

OUR NEUTRALITY IS A COMPASS FOR FINDING PEACE IN THE REGION

A State's foreign policy plays a major role in ensuring domestic prosperity. Having achieved the internationally recognized status of permanent neutrality, we, first of all, attained favourable conditions for pursuing our national interests. Furthermore, Turkmen neutrality is not a wall protecting us from the dangers and troubles of the outer world. On the contrary, it is a strong position for actively influencing the situation in the region and, in general, in the world in order to establish effective international cooperation, which, in the contemporary world, is one of the main factors for domestic economic development. We are endeavouring to have tranquil and equal relations with all peoples; and our national interest is pursued through economic openness and political tolerance.

The recognition of our country's status as a permanently neutral State has noticeably expedited the "open door" policy that we have conducted from the first days immediately after obtaining independence. In addition to Turkmenistan's rich hydrocarbon deposits and geopolitical position, foreign investors are today also being attracted by the country's legislative basis, which was strengthened by additional guarantees through the adoption of a constitutional law on permanent neutrality.

It is not by chance that I am mentioning this today. In my view, as yet not everyone has realized that Turkmen neutrality is not merely our response to the challenge of the age and is not solely a unique instrument in efforts to prevent our country from becoming another "apple of discord" on the map of the world, if one has in mind its inexhaustible resources and the resulting natural strategic interest in us on the part of the great Powers. Turkmen neutrality, and I constantly repeat this without false modesty, is the property of the entire region and the entire world community. This aspect is becoming increasingly important now at a time when the confrontational model based on a balance of force in the world is clearly giving way to the contemporary regionalization of international relations, in which the general direction of the political process is determined by the state of equilibrium in the political system of global ties.

Even the two and a half years that have passed since the historic, in our view, adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution on the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan, have convincingly confirmed that our neutral status is in keeping with the general interests of our neighbours because it is opening up broad prospects for developing mutually beneficial cooperation in the region, stabilizing the situation and creating a climate of mutual respect and trust.

Many regional political leaders have spoken words that are pleasant for every Turkmen to the effect that our neutrality represents for our neighbours a unique compass for achieving peace, harmony and stability. We are endeavouring to confirm this assessment through daily work in complying with the obligations placed on us in connection with the recognition of the status of a permanently neutral State. Turkmenistan's peacemaking potential today is being actively used by the United Nations. Today we have created all the conditions for holding bilateral and multilateral negotiations in order to settle and resolve disputes that arise, establish friendly contacts and promote cooperation within the framework of major international forums. This involves not only the technical and purely organizational side, since it is extremely important for the country that organizes such meetings not to dominate the participants in negotiations, but rather to have good relations with all States in the world and not interfere in their internal affairs.

Neutral status considerably helped Turkmenistan carry out its consolidating function for two years within the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO). One can say with certainty that, during the two years in which we chaired the ECO regional structure, in spite of certain subjective and objective complications, it became firmly established in the system of inter-State organizations of a non-political nature. Time has showed that the emphasis placed on transport, telecommunications, and pipeline projects as the basis for intraregional development was correct. It was necessary in the literal sense of the word to reconstitute the region, which, for long years, had been dismembered by artificial barriers, to revitalize the inter-State road transport network, open up the newly independent States, and provide them with an outlet to the world's sea routes. We were most gratified by the fact that the first noticeable impetus in this process to a large extent was the construction initiated by us and the Islamic Republic of Iran of the Tedzhen-Serakhs-Mashhad railway line, which has become the "golden link" in the Istanbul-Beijing trans-Asian mainline and provided the States of the region with maximum outlet to the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea.

Generally speaking, Turkmenistan's example clearly proves that the scale of values is greater in geopolitics than only within the geographic bounds of a country. I am profoundly convinced that the greater the number of States that, having rid themselves of the "small" country complex, send the community of nations positive impulses, the speedier the development of the peaceful and constructive process will be both on a regional as well as a global scale.

AGREEMENT ON THE GROUND BEGINS WITH ONE'S NEIGHBOUR

In developing the theme of peace in relation to the new peace-building situation in the area that has been set free from ideological dogmas and

prejudices, must also take account of a trend which impinges on the new interpretation of the concepts of "brotherhood" and "good neighbourliness".

In that context, I should like to touch on the issue of cooperation between countries the brotherhood of which was bolstered by Communist ideology and whose good neighbourliness was ensured by assumptions of a merely moral nature. Experience has convinced us that the elimination of rationality from communication between peoples undermined the foundations of the ideology itself, for it turned out that peoples can be fed on myths just as much as they could during the period of the Communist experiment. It is well known that myths have a life of their own. So do stereotypes. It would, no doubt, have been not only naive but also foolhardy to assume that the USSR would instantaneously be replaced by a new civilized community driven by the well regulated springs of the market machinery. That kind of thing does not happen.

Our approach to the CIS should be not merely indulgent but, at the same time, human and pragmatic. Incidentally, such a combination of attitudes is something that has to be learnt in politics, and that is especially true with respect to the CIS. The CIS has carried out a great - and I am not afraid to use the word - mission. It prevented bloodshed when the last empire in the world fell. But our attitude towards the CIS is more than just one of gratitude. The Commonwealth is necessary, certainly not as a memorial to the Soviet empire and still less as the bearer of impotent assumptions of brotherhood and friendship, but as a fundamentally new mechanism for cooperation between States in the worldwide community of nations, dealings between which must and can comprise an entire range of general signs without overlooking differences.

Since the day on which the CIS began to operate, Turkmenistan has acted in accordance with the spirit and letter of its constitutive instruments, regarding the Commonwealth primarily as an effective framework mechanism.

At the same time, Turkmenistan is against attempts to bring about a hasty and unjustified integration and against any plans to create a rigid machinery with supranational functions. The manner of Turkmenistan's participation in the CIS depends, in addition to the above-mentioned factors, on its international legal obligations as a neutral State. We are therefore in favour of flexibility and democracy and for the right to choose. Each entity is free to decide for itself whether or not to join particular projects, plans or programmes, depending on its interests and possibilities. This idea was, in my view, clearly expressed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who stated at the most recent Summit of Heads of State of the Commonwealth: "Nobody should compel anyone." We in Turkmenistan are convinced that only the principle of free consent will ensure the survival of the Commonwealth as a mechanism which played an immense role during the period of the collapse of the unitary Soviet State and forestalled the highly detrimental consequences of that process by creating conditions for the smooth and harmonious transition of the CIS countries to their development as sovereign States.

With respect to the outlook for the CIS, we have no doubt that the Commonwealth will inevitably become a civilized alliance in the territory of the former Soviet Union. All that is essential is time and an awareness on the part

of each State that the CIS can do no more than fulfil its intended purpose and serve exclusively as a coordinating and consultative organ. There is absolutely nothing to prevent two or more of the CIS countries from creating integrated structures or merging to form a single State. But it is our belief that such a process should have no overall adverse effect on the Commonwealth, which was certainly not conceived and created as a collectivizing organization.

For us today, the CIS, apart from its consultative functions, means primarily each individual State with which we have firm bilateral and mutually beneficial relations. It is precisely on that basis that I am convinced, irrespective of what anyone wishes, that a civilized type of relationship on many levels will come into existence, complementing and developing the worldwide trend towards integration. In that context we shall endeavour, with all our neighbours, and not only within the framework of the CIS, to build good, friendly relations.

This is clearly exemplified by the fresh start in the history of Turkmen-Iranian relations which took place almost seven years ago. Obviously, Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran each has its own view of the world. But in the first months following Turkmenistan's accession to independence we were able to set aside our mutual suspicion, which had become second nature after so many years of the "Iron Curtain", and to establish trusting and genuinely neighbourly relations. Since then, at the highest level alone, between the Presidents of the two countries, some 60 meetings have taken place at which there has been frank dialogue on all the issues that are of concern to our peoples. We shed our mistrust, rid our contacts entirely of ideology and concentrated on seeking our common economic interest.

One practical outcome of this approach has been the implementation of projects for the construction of a railway between our two countries and for the laying of a pipeline for the delivery of gas from Turkmenistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Today, now that the trend in favour of the removal of restrictions in our partnership with our southern neighbour is becoming established, we are prepared to expedite our work to resolve the problem of transporting Turkmen gas through the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey to Europe, and also of oil from Kazakhstan and the Caspian to the ports of the Persian Gulf. It must be said that these projects are highly promising and, indeed, essential for a civilized regional partnership in which not only the participating countries have an interest. One may perhaps speak of the advent of a new age in the Asian region, an age which proclaims fundamentally different, multidimensional markers and an emancipation from archaic stereotypes. Turkmenistan is ready to act within that altered and more progressive frame of reference.

New thinking is also essential today in approaches to the problem of the final determination of the status of the Caspian under international law, which is of the greatest importance for regional and, more generally, for worldwide cooperation. The current uncertainty on this matter hinders the rational utilization by the littoral countries of the vast resources of the Caspian Sea. The legal regime of the Caspian has until now been regulated by treaties between the Soviet Union and the Islamic Republic of Iran under which the Sea was divided between the two countries. The change in the geopolitical situation has

brought about a new relationship between interests in the Caspian region and has made it essential to devise new approaches to determining the status of the Caspian Sea. Most of the littoral countries now adhere to a sectoral variant of the division of the Caspian. Turkmenistan rejects that principle, just as it also rejected the condominium concept which formerly prevailed. In both cases, our main concern is that the interests of all littoral States should be fully taken into account in order that cooperation in the Caspian should be based on mutual respect, equality of rights and mutual interest. The Caspian must be a sea where agreement prevails and its resources must be the property of all the littoral States, each of which has a right to an equal share of its resources. For that reason, I consider that a new approach, satisfactory to all sides, to determining the status of the Caspian should be worked out not just at the level of experts and the foreign policy bodies of the five littoral States. Such a process also requires the convening of a special summit of the heads of the States bordering the Caspian. For our part we are ready for such a meeting, and propose that it be held before the end of this year in Ashgabat.

I should not want anyone to think that, in naming particular countries as Turkmenistan's partners, I am for one reason or another discounting the Russian Federation.

Not at all: cooperation with Russia is a separate and, I would say, an exemplary topic, for that country cannot be considered in isolation from all the existing aspects of world development. Russia has suffered more than any other country in the world from the historic destiny that has fallen to its lot. Its own fate, throughout the ages, has been to bring fire down on itself.

We may now regret the fact that the Russian Federation is not hastening to our marketplace. Turkish, Iranian, German, Israeli, British, French and Japanese companies, and representatives of a further 10 or so States, have today established their spheres of activity in our territory. Major changes conducive to active partnership have occurred in our relations with the United States of America.

But I would not wish to claim this as a sign of either equality or of difference. The situations differ too much to be brought together in a single approach. Yes, the Russian Federation is a great Power with vast potential both for its own development and for the development of those with whom, in one way or another, it comes into contact. Aside from purely economic interests, we are bound together by the closest ties of historical and cultural traditions.

However - and this is no secret for anyone - the extent of our economic, political and cultural partnership has recently been somewhat curtailed, although not at our initiative.

I do not wish to dwell in detail on that statement since the origins of the situation lie both in the inertia of the Soviet mind-set and in the corporate interests of particular Russian monopolists.

However, if we were now to adopt an entirely negative approach in our evaluation of the existing situation, that would be unrealistic of us. The central thing in politics is not whether a particular phenomenon is good or bad;

what is important in politics is to take events as they are and to endeavour to bring about a rapprochement of interests, taking all relevant factors into account. What is required here is the humanity and pragmatism that I mentioned with reference to the subject of the CIS.

The main thing is that there is no disagreement on that score between us and the leadership of the Russian Federation, its President Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin. On the contrary, there is a profound understanding of both the objective and the subjective difficulties, and an appreciation of the fact that it is a complex matter to overcome them within a fixed time scale. The true fact is that sooner or later we shall reach an understanding of the advantages and enduring value of close and equal collaboration and that we shall ultimately transcend the past and move forward to the future. That is how it always has been and always will be.

STEEL 'ARTERIES' OF THE NEXT CENTURY

The inability to export gas by pipeline through the territory of the Russian Federation has undoubtedly caused some difficulties for the economy of Turkmenistan. However, the overall progress we have achieved in restructuring the economy and our reliance on diversification have enabled us to overcome a difficult situation, and these difficulties today are not predominant. Yes, gas exports to the north have stopped, but exports of oil and oil products, agricultural raw materials and textiles are constantly growing. Literally a few days ago, we put into operation a large complex for the production of compressed gas in eastern Turkmenistan.

At the same time, Turkmenistan is actively seeking alternative access routes to international markets for energy carriers. The gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran is already operating, and its capacity in the next few years will grow to eight billion cubic metres of 'blue fuel' annually. As of now, there are at least six ongoing large-scale pipeline-construction projects for the export of oil and gas in several directions. All these projects have been evaluated by experts of international organizations and their implementation is quite feasible in the near future.

Our strategy for executing pipeline projects has been and continues to be based on its diversity. Proven and confirmed reserves of hydrocarbons are quite sufficient to justify planning and constructing right now several major pipelines that would supplement the existing one in the north.

The varied pipeline infrastructure will permit an increased volume and diversification of world supplies of energy resources and will make it possible to stabilize and guarantee their international distribution.

In this context we are putting forward an initiative for ensuring security and unobstructed transit of energy raw materials by major international pipelines. It has already been discussed in preliminary form with a number of national leaders and also with the United Nations Secretary-General. I have the impression that in the twenty-first century the problem of international guarantees and legal regulation of the functioning of such pipelines will be

comparable to the problem of navigation through sea straits which the world community spent much effort in trying to resolve at the turn of the nineteenth century. At that time the question of legal regulation of the use of sea straits, which were the main routes for the flow of goods and cargoes, was regarded as vital for the very existence of States. Today, international pipelines are of comparable importance for mankind.

Sometimes, unfortunately, certain politicians attempt to represent the Turkmen model of a complex pipeline network as some kind of political trump card in regional politics. I should like once more to recall the principles of openness and lack of prejudice that Turkmenistan displays whenever the implementation of any project is being discussed.

For instance, the laying of a trans-Caspian pipeline would not mean that we were abandoning the construction of trans-Iranian routes, just as the emergence of alternative export routes to the south does not mean that we are giving up using the trans-Russian gas pipeline. Our fuel reserves are quite sufficient to ensure an uninterrupted flow in all directions. However, the biggest and quickest gains will of course accrue - this is not a political game but the laws of economics - to those of our partners who are first to participate in the execution of pipeline projects and who offer the best conditions for a mutually advantageous partnership.

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

Turkmenistan, like the majority of countries in Central Asia, attained independence in an era of worldwide reforms, coupled with the start of a transition from a policy of confrontation to a philosophy of world unity. This has created for us additional advantages, but has also placed on us a special responsibility. I am not tired of repeating that the trend towards global development in the twenty-first century will depend to a large extent on our region.

I should like to emphasize in particular that the interest in Central Asia today is in no way fortuitous. The countries of this region, having gained the opportunity for direct participation in international relations, are offering the world an enormous geopolitical and geoeconomic potential, as well as additional possibilities for facing the global challenges of the twenty-first century. It must be noted that, in the course of the last two centuries, Central Asia was the subject of a bitter struggle among the big Powers over spheres of influence. It was a time of great intrigues, based on colonial ambitions and the principle of "might is right". A number of times during their long history the peaceful peoples of Central Asia had to yield temporarily to superior force, but they never reconciled themselves to anyone's diktat; they were, however, always ready for an equitable partnership and sincere, mutually advantageous cooperation.

We are determined to stand firmly on our own feet and to cooperate as equals with all those who are ready for a partnership with us. The international community should realize the immutable fact that the countries of Asia have ceased to be pawns on someone else's chessboard. They are pursuing

and will continue in the future to pursue their own policy in international affairs. And this is not a challenge to the developed countries; it is an appeal to them to weigh contemporary realities and to realize that they will find it especially advantageous to view the countries of Asia, including Central Asia, not as potential 'spheres of influence' but as reliable and worthy partners. No one is preventing the developed countries - that would be impossible and, moreover, disadvantageous - from participating in the harnessing of our natural wealth and from the enjoyment of our geographical advantages; on the contrary, we invite them all to join forces in such an endeavour, demanding in return only one thing: mutual respect and a fair and equitable partnership.

On the basis of the foregoing, affirming such principles and convictions, Turkmenistan is preparing to enter the new millennium. I am sure that, if these principles are achieved, it will be more propitious both for our country and for the whole world.